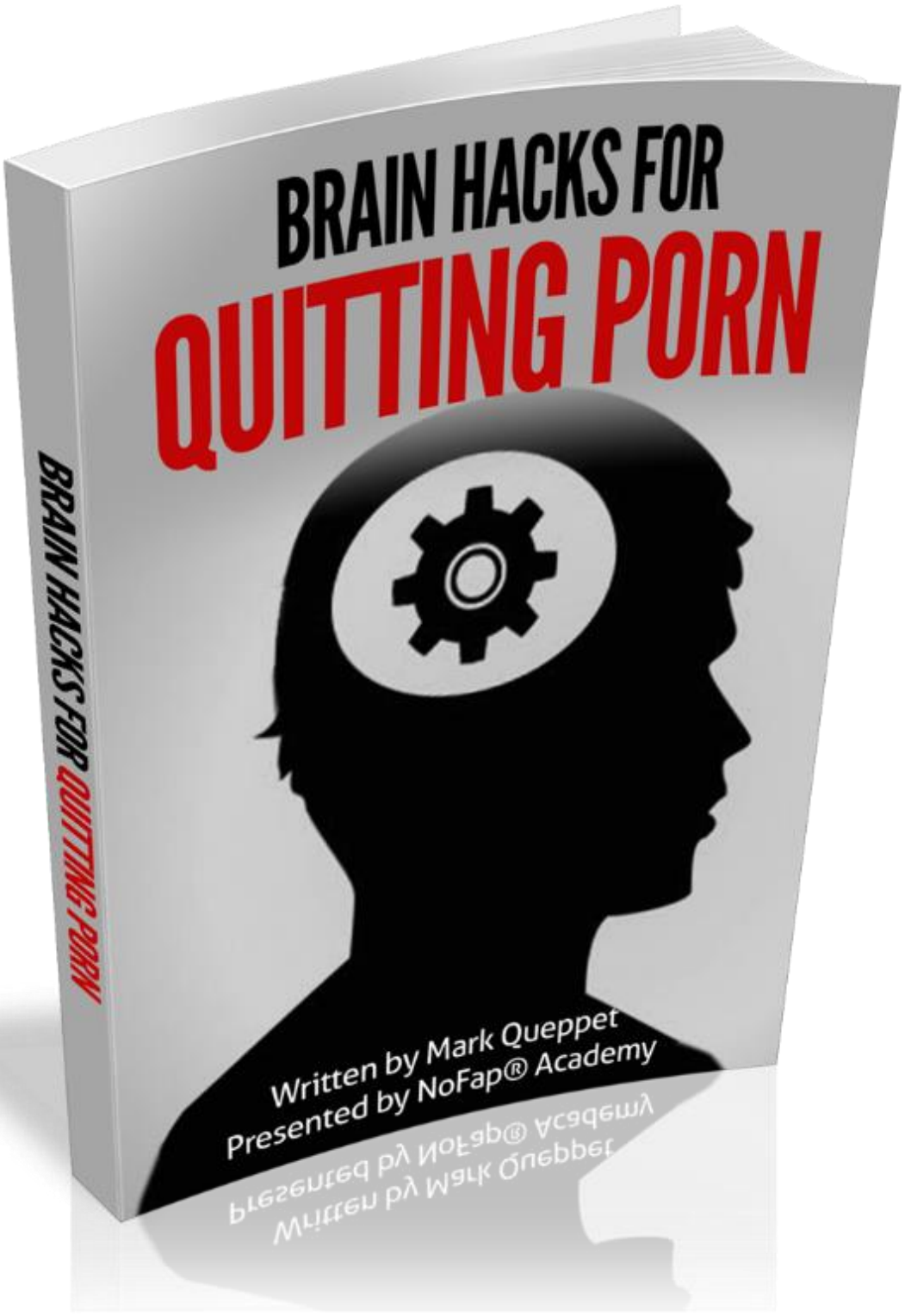
BRAIN HACKS FOR
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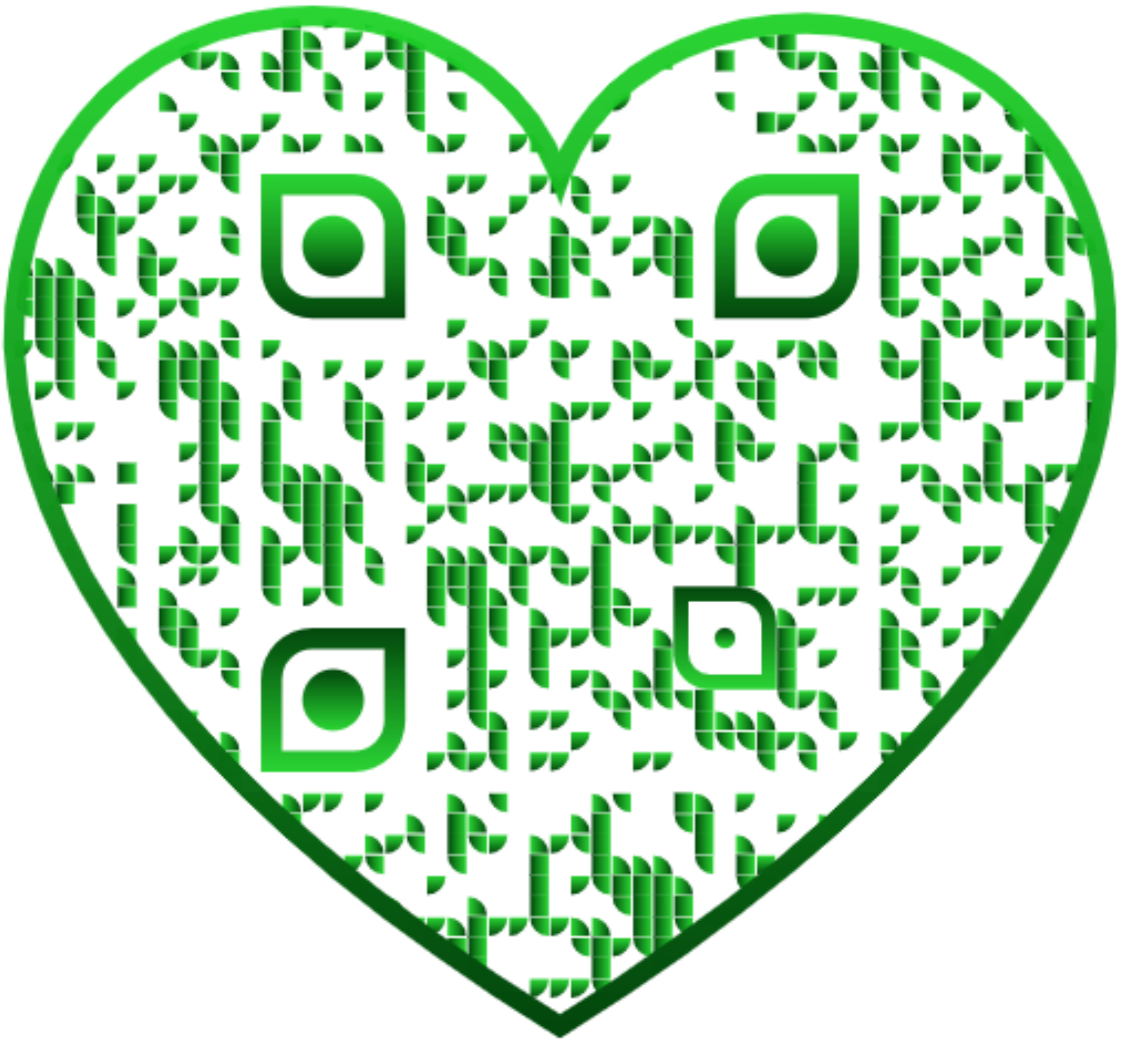

Brain Hacks for Quitting Porn

Written by Mark Queppet

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Purpose

Greetings Fapstronauts,

Our goal here at the NoFap® Academy is to help people quit porn and live more awesome lives by rebooting their brains (if you don't know what NoFap® or reboot is, check this link out first). We recognize that this is no easy task. Quitting porn is not for the faint of heart - there are going to be challenges no matter what. **However, we want to make sure that your reboot is no more challenging for you than it absolutely *must* be**.

We see people regularly making their reboots more difficult than necessary due to a lack of understanding about how their brains work. They unknowingly do things that set themselves up to fail, and then become confused or disheartened over their lack of sustained progress. I know firsthand how miserable of a situation this can be.

I hated feeling so committed, so sure of the change I was trying to make in my life, only to end up relapsing later that day. This happened to me over and over again. In a way, this was a blessing because it forced me to really learn the mechanics of quitting porn from the inside out. This understanding has been deepened further through coaching dozens of individual clients as well as mentoring many more people through the NoFap® Academy's Reboot Camp.

My goal in this e-book is to help you stop fighting with your brain and start cooperating with it. I'm certain that if you take the time to digest and implement the material contained here, you will relapse less, reboot more easily, and also make lifestyle changes that really stick.

Let's get started!

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Two Kinds of Thinking

In order to start working with our brains rather than against them, we need to understand a bit about how they work. Based on a large body of psychological research, there appears to be two different kinds of thinking that our brains engage in, which we'll describe as "automatic" vs. "calculated" thinking.

If you want to learn more in depth about the science behind these two thought systems, I highly recommend the book "Thinking, Fast and Slow" by Daniel Kahneman. Here's an example that will quickly help you experience these two different kinds of thinking. Do the first step before reading the second step.

1. Get a piece of paper and write down a list of any five food items

2. Now next to those food items, rank the food items in order of how much you like them by adding a number next to their name.

If you did the exercise, you'll notice that in the first step, your brain automatically produces food items for you to write down. This spontaneous form of thinking is an example of "automatic" thinking. It takes very little effort on your end to make it happen.

In the second step you had to slow down to compare the foods and ask yourself which you like better in order to rank them. Perhaps you had a particularly hard time in deciding the order if you had some foods that you liked or disliked a similar amount. This more intensive computational kind of thinking is what we are calling "calculated" thinking.

So basically automatic thinking controls your reflexes, initial reactions, and intuition. Calculated thinking takes input from your automatic thinking and arranges it deliberately - it's the thing that lets you solve complex problems like long division or safely time your merge on a busy highway.

Understanding the characteristics of these two different thought systems holds some essential keys for quitting porn. Let's look at how these two systems get tripped up by porn addiction and then we can start figuring out what to do about it.

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The Reasons for the Struggle

There are many reasons why quitting porn can be difficult, but one of the main components is this:

1. Your brain tends to default toward automatic thinking to save energy

2. Your automatic thinking tends to be wired toward porn use.

Believe it or not, on average your brain uses 20% of your calories. Apparently calculated and automatic thinking use these calories (and other brain resources) differently. Basically, the harder your brain has to work, the more “tired” it becomes. This is why you can come out of a tough exam like the SAT test and feel totally drained even though you’ve been sitting in a chair for the past few hours.

In nature, things follow the law of least effort. If there are two ways to get the same result, we will always default to the easier, less energy-intensive option. From an evolutionary standpoint, it's good to always have extra energy available so that we can have some gas in the tank to deal with a life threatening emergency (or reproduce if the opportunity comes along).

So because of this, our brain wants to default to automatic thinking whenever possible. Automatic thinking consumes much less energy (we even do it in our sleep through our dreams). Ever get in the car and end up driving to work or school out of habit even though that wasn’t the current destination? That’s automatic thinking at work. The problem is that for someone with a history of porn use, automatic thinking will almost always lead to porn.

There are a few reasons for this:

We Are Designed To Procreate

The first issue is that our automatic thinking is wired toward procreation, and to the porn addict's brain - porn is procreation. The deeply-wired urge to mate gets hijacked by porn, a virtual simulation of mating. This automatic attraction is compounded by the "Coolidge Effect" - a characteristic of our human sexuality (most strongly seen in males) where the introduction of "new sexual mates" allows for constant arousal.

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There is a near infinite supply of porn stars, sex acts and videos to explore online. The less rational part of the male brain sees this as an opportunity to become an evolutionary stud - this super alpha male who gets to pass on his genetic material to thousands of pixilated “mates.” In reality it just means a lot of "fertilization" of the computer screen.

So because of this, the brain of the porn addict is constantly drawn back into this virtual harem under the illusion that it is achieving an evolutionary peak.

We Are Designed To Avoid Pain

The second issue is that through regularly using porn, our brain can become addicted to it. This addiction leads to a buildup of DeltaPhosB along the neural pathways associated with porn use. This buildup is what causes those uncomfortable craving sensations that make you want to reach for your fix.

In our automatic thinking, we are designed to take the path of least resistance to removing pain. If we touch a hot stove by accident, our hand jerks back involuntarily. If we had to stop and think about whether we should take our hand off the stove we'd be in real trouble.

So when we are suffering a craving, our automatic thinking says, "I know the perfect way to make this pain go away! Porn!", which leads us to our next issue:

Porn Is Extremely Easy To Access

For most porn addicts, once that automatic thought to use porn comes up, there is literally a span of seconds that separates them from whipping out their smartphones or hopping on their computers to get their fix.

This lack of barrier makes it extremely easy for the automatic thinking to continuously be acted upon. This regular action embeds the addiction more deeply and makes it more difficult to quit. In a way, someone recovering from drug or alcohol addiction has an "advantage" in recovery because they have to at least go to a drug dealer or a liquor store to get their fix. A porn addict almost always has access to porn sitting in their pocket.

So hopefully by this point you are beginning to see how right off the bat, the odds are stacked against your recovery process. But don't worry - there's a ton you can do to overcome these challenges and showing you exactly how to do this is what the NoFap® Academy is all about!

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The Brain Budget

As we saw in the previous section, we cannot rely on our automatic thoughts to lead us to freedom from porn. The solution to this situation is to use our calculated thought. Along with being able to order and direct our automatic thought, our calculated thought can actually override our automatic thought.

This is a skill every sound-minded person develops to at least some degree through the process of maturity. We learn not to hit people when we are angry, to not throw temper tantrums when we don't get our way, and we learn to curb our impulses and compulsions so that we can construct the lives that we want... or at least that's the hope.

However, due to the issues mentioned in the previous section - overriding the automatic impulses around porn takes more than your average level of self-control. In order to begin wrestling your automatic thought away from porn, you need to understand the most important element of this mental override function:

Overriding your automatic thought with calculated thought requires mental energy. However, this mental energy is *limited* so it must be *budgeted* to ensure you always have enough mental energy available to overcome automatic porn urges.

This idea of limited override is well established under the theory of "ego depletion." In one classic experiment, people who had to resist an offering of cookies subsequently gave up on a hard puzzle much more quickly than people who had to resist an offering of radishes. There are many more experiments like this, but the heart of the findings is that the more you have to override your automatic thought within a certain time period, the harder this override becomes.

This is first mechanic in the "game" of porn addiction recovery. The goal is to consistently use your calculated mind to shift your automatic porn-addict-thought-patterns to porn-free-thought-patterns. If you can do this consistently, you will eventually rewrite those old automatic thought patterns with the new ones.

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When that happens fully, you will be fully recovered. Your automatic thoughts will be aligned with a porn-free life rather than a porn-addicted one. At that point, staying porn free takes little (if any) effort on your part. However to get to that point, you must work hard and smart with your limited pool of calculated thought to avoid relapses which can undo this wiring.

So now that you understand the heart of what we are after here, let's get into the brain hacks that will help you on your journey!

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Brain Hacks for Maximizing Your Mental Energy

If you have a lot of credit card debt and you want to pay it off as efficiently as possible, what would you do? Chances are you'd look at your spending, draw up a budget so you can pay for what's essential, cut out the non-essential spending, and then funnel all the extra money into paying off the credit card.

That's kind of what you need to do with your mental energy when quitting porn. The big difference is that you don't know when you are going to have to make "payments." Porn urges can strike at any time so you need to make sure you've got the mental energy in reserve to override those automatic impulses.

There are a few different things that you can do to maximize your mental energy for quitting porn.

Brain Hack #1: Don't Try To Quit Anything Else While You Are Quitting Porn

If you want to give yourself the very best chance of successfully quitting porn, then make quitting porn your focus. If you try to remove too much at once, you will bankrupt your mental energy and put yourself at the mercy of your automatic thought patterns.

So this means that if you are a smoker, do not try to quit smoking while simultaneously quitting porn. If you are a regular fast food eater, don't try and go on a 100% raw veggie diet while quitting porn. As a general rule you'll want to cut things out one at a time - start with porn and anything else you want to cut out will likely fall down like dominoes after.

At the same time, this doesn't mean you should binge on these other things. If you recognize there are other things in your life you want to stop doing, by all means try to moderate them or avoid them to an extent - just don't put hard restrictions on yourself that end up depleting your mental energy. If your budget of self--control is at it's max, it's better that you eat some junk food rather than watch some porn.

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For the average person, the only time you will absolutely need to cut out an additional behavior is if you find that the behavior leads to porn use. So if there is a particular TV show, website, or video game that tends to lead you to relapse, then you should probably cut that out.

As a caveat to this point, things can get a bit more complicated when there are additional addictions beyond porn. So for example, if you've got an alcohol problem and tend to watch porn when you are hungover the next day, then it's going to be hard to quit porn if you keep drinking.

Likewise, if your porn addiction is actually just a part of a bigger internet addiction that includes internet surfing, binge watching shows, and playing video games, then you might have to make some more serious restrictions (or eliminations) of screen time. Handling these kinds of situations can be tricky and you may need to get the help of a mental health professional. **But for the average person, just keep it simple by focus on quitting porn and use common sense for moderating everything else.**

Brain Hack #2: Introduce New Habits That Give You More Mental Energy

If you take something out of your life, you must put something back in. This is the law of habit replacement. While I do not recommend cutting out additional bad habits while quitting porn, I highly recommend incorporating *good* habits.

The very best habits to incorporate are the ones that are going to bring you more mental energy. These are the basic kinds of habits that are the foundation to a good life such as:

- Daily Exercise
- Mental centering such as meditation or prayer
- Healthy diet
- Good sleep hygiene

All of these things can create favorable brain changes that increase your ability for dealing with urges. Most successful rebooters report these kinds of habits making a major positive difference in their reboot. Because of this, I think these sorts of habits should be prioritized.

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Brain Hack #3: Incorporate New Habits Slowly

Now, it would certainly be awesome if you could get 10 hours of sleep, be up by 5:30am, meditate for two hours, and then run 15 miles every day - but this is not something you should be aiming for right off the bat (or arguably ever).

While I pointed out how these sorts of habits can bring you more mental energy, it still costs mental energy to create these habits. If you become too aggressive with the implementation of your new habits, then your new habits might actually be setting you up for a relapse.

You want to add these empowering habits to your life, but you also want to make sure you are keeping enough of your mental energy available for handling the work of quitting porn. Because of this, I recommend introducing new habits slowly - almost- painfully slow in fact. **Porn wires the brain to be hooked on immediate gratification and I'm asking you to construct your habits from a mindset of delayed gratification and sustainability.**

If your diet consists of Funyuns and Cheetos, then you'd be better off focusing on having one serving of green veggies a day instead of trying to go 100% paleo. If you find yourself winded just reaching for the TV remote, you'd be better off going for a 5 minute walk every day than telling yourself to run 10 miles.

You can always do more when you are motivated, but having super easy baselines for your habits are essential for those times when your mental energy is low. Demanding habits fall apart when mental energy is low (and sometimes even lead to swings in the opposite direction),- easy habits don't. **When it comes to habits, small and consistent is way better than intense and short-lived.**

Brain Hack #4: Develop Your Routines

Your brain loves routines. This is because once a routine is learned, it allows complex tasks to be done using relatively low amounts of mental energy. Let's look at the mind of someone without a routine for when they get home from work vs. the mind of someone with a routine:

Brain Without a Routine

"*Phew finally home, time for some internet surfing! Hmm, well maybe I should get dinner ready first instead. Now I just need to figure out what to make...On second thought, maybe I should do one of my new habits...I've been meaning to watch some more of those Reboot Camp videos, but I also need start that Slight Edge book...Eh, I'll just worry about this stuff later, I'll spend a few minutes surfing the net to unwind first.*"

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Now if any of you are like how I used to be, at this point there is an extremely high chance that a few minutes will turn into a few hours of internet surfing, some porn, and a late night dinner of hot pockets and shame.

A big part of the issue here is that when the brain is presented with a lot of different options it must make a decision, and it will often default to the easiest and most gratifying option (especially if it is already tired after a long day at work and has the additional strain of abstaining from porn).

Brain With a Routine

Alternatively, here's the mind of someone who has their routine on point:

"*Phew finally home, I really want to just do some internet surfing but I'm going to do my post-work routine first*."

You see, instead of a bunch of different decisions, there is just one: to do the routine or not. People who are used to living without routine tend to look at routines as draining, but they actually help you save energy.

Now an example routine here might look like this:

- Put pre-made meal from the weekly cooking routine into the oven
- Meditate while it warms up
- Eat
- Read 5 pages of The Slight Edge
- Watch one Reboot Camp video

Now this is a routine that you might want to build up to. Just having a meal ready for yourself might be the first step. After that becomes the norm, add the meditation. I'd much rather see a client build this routine over two months rather than overnight, because I know the overnight shift might revert back just as quickly.

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Brain Hacks to Prevent Relapse

So even if you follow all of the advice in the previous brain hacks, you still might be finding yourself in situations where that automatic porn thinking starts taking control. In these situations it's best to have some safeguards in place to help protect you from making impulsive decisions.

As we mentioned, one of the biggest issues with porn addiction is how quickly and easily the average person can relapse. If we can create some space between the trigger and the relapse, it will give your calculated thought some extra time to kick in and override that impulse.

Brain Hack #5: Avoid Triggering Material

This one is so obvious it almost doesn't need to be said, but it's such a common cause for relapse that I'm saying it anyway. **Treat triggering material like porn and just stay away from it.** It may suck having to give up Game of Thrones or other kinds of shows that contain lots of nudity and sex, but if something keeps sabotaging your reboot then you need to give it up while rebooting.

Watch out for automatic thoughts that tell you looking at sexual things on YouTube is okay because "it's not technically porn." If you are looking at something sexual for enjoyment I can guarantee it will trigger that part of your brain that is hungry for porn.

Putting yourself in that situation is like feeding a dog from the table. Once you do, the dog (your addict brain) isn't going to leave you alone. So just make things easier on yourself and say no to triggering material.

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Brain Hack #6: Make It Difficult To Relapse

There are a number of things that go under this tip, but the core concept is to make it more difficult on yourself to unconsciously decide to watch porn. The more your calculated brain must work in order to watch porn, the better the chance of you overriding the porn urge. Here's a few things to help you with that:

Set Up A Porn Blocker

Porn blockers are not a solution. They never rewire your automatic thought patterns (which is the goal of reboot), they just halt them. Take the porn blocker away and the old automatic thought patterns fire up again very easily. So just installing a porn blocker and calling your reboot a success isn't going to work.

But with that being said, porn blockers can certainly help protect you from the knee jerk reaction to relapse. If you have to go into your backyard to dig up the porn blocker password, that's a lot of time for you to reconsider your decision to watch porn and maybe end up making a better choice.

Restrict The Areas You Use Your Smartphone Or Computer

Most guys have a favorite place to watch porn and masturbate. One of the best things you can do is set up some rules around letting yourself get in those situations. Your brain is triggered by associations so disrupting your normal patterns here can be very useful.

So if you regularly masturbate to your smartphone in your bed, then make a rule for yourself that you don’t ever take your smartphone in your bed and instead keep it plugged in across the room.

Maybe when you have a lot of work to get done on the computer, you can try to go to a coffee shop or library instead of sitting in the privacy of your home. It could just be as simple as using your computer in a part of your living space where other people might walk by.

Avoid Using The Computer During Problem Times

If you tend to relapse when you are on the computer late at night, just stop putting yourself in that situation. Make a habit of no computer after 8pm. If you relapse after getting home from work, then do some other routine then and use the computer at a different time. Get to know your patterns and modify them!

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Brain Hack #7: Plan Your Decisions In Advance

It takes much more mental energy to *create* a plan than to *remember* a plan that was already created. This is why it is so important to plan in advance what you are going to do when you are triggered.

If you just assume you'll figure it out in the moment, you are taking a major risk. When your brain is spasming and craving porn, it's very unlikely that you'll have the mental energy available to come up with a good alternative path of action.

There are two major things that you will want to plan out and set up in advance: Your "safety behavior," and your "panic button."

Safety Behavior

A safety behavior is a very easy--to--perform action that is designed to occupy and distract you while an urge passes. Notice I said, "very easy." A lot of people make the mistake of trying to do something difficult like pushups or homework when they are triggered. I don't think this is a good move.

The reason for this is because getting yourself to engage in a difficult activity takes significantly more mental energy than an easy one. When you are triggered your reserves of mental energy will be lower, so we want to make your safety behavior as easy as possible.

Here are some examples of good safety behaviors:

- Reading a book
- Listening to music
- Going for a walk (though you would need a backup for nights/rainy days)
- Playing an instrument (only if you already know how to play)

Pick your safety behavior and use it. This simple discipline can go a long way to helping you recover.

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Panic Button

The panic button is kind of like a computer version of a safety behavior. One of the core problems is that you can get to porn in a few keystrokes on your computer. **You need to make sure that you can just as easily get to support material that will help you get your mind in the right place.**

I highly recommend setting up a bookmark in your browser bar to some kind of support material (you can always rename it to something else if you are worried about people seeing it). That way, as soon as you are tempted to view some porn, one click will take you somewhere that will help re--align your mind to what it is you are trying to accomplish.

You can set this button to link to whatever you find most inspirational but I highly recommend linking it to the excellent **Panic Button on NoFap®'s website.**

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Beyond the Hacks

With these tips you'll be better able to maximize your mental energy for quitting porn. While my hope is that this guide will be enough to help many of you to successfully quit porn, a lot of you will simply need something more comprehensive truly break free from porn addiction.

For many people out there, porn use is deeply embedded in the thought patterns and belief systems of the user. A true recovery is only achieved when those inner patterns are found, processed, and rewritten.

The path to doing this goes beyond the scope of a quick ebook like this and becomes a serious journey of transformation.

A good way to tell if you need this deeper work is if you continuously sabotage your own success by relapsing. Basically, if what you are doing isn't working, you need to do something different.

If you want our help achieving this change from the inside out, then make sure you check out the NoFap® Academy Reboot Camp.

We've put together a comprehensive program for taking you from A to Z of the reboot process. We want to give you everything you need to get clean and stay clean. You don't need to face this challenge alone!

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